

Has Your Evaluation Instrument Evolved With the Times, or Are You Still Using Slate and Chalk?

In many conversations that I've had with fellow administrators, when asked where their evaluation instrument came from, the reply is often, "I'm not sure, it's been here since I've started working here." As the demands on public school teachers and administrators change, it makes sense that our evaluation process and instruments should be updated to meet our needs.

After discussion between our district administrators, it was decided that our evaluation process and instrument needed to "evolve" in order to meet our needs. As a result, a committee of teachers and administration was formed to address this need. Not wanting to "reinvent the wheel," the committee contacted several schools in order to obtain copies of their evaluation processes and instruments. Once all had arrived, the committee set about developing an evaluation process and instrument that would fit the district's needs.

A few of the schools that sent us evaluation instruments had adopted a rubric developed by Charlotte Danielson, author of the book "Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching." Danielson's work was originally published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) in 1996 with the latest edition being released in 2007. The development of Danielson's rubric was heavily influenced by her involvement in the development of Educational Testing Service's (ETS) Praxis Series. The Praxis Series is composed of three components: Praxis I: Pre-Professional Assessments; Praxis II: Subject Assessments; and Praxis III: Classroom Performance Assessments. Many state and local agencies have adopted the Praxis I and II Series as a tool used in making teacher licensing decisions. Praxis III is designed to assess actual teaching skills and classroom performance and it was this component that had the most influence in Danielson's development of the framework. In addition to the Praxis series, Danielson's rubric was also influenced by extensive surveys of the research literature, wide-ranging job analyses, summaries of the demands of state licensing programs, and fieldwork (Danielson, 2007).

Danielson's framework is composed of four broad domains that are supported by extensive research: Domain 1: Planning and Preparation; Domain 2: The Classroom Environment; Domain 3: Instruction; and Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities. Each of these domains contains several subcomponents that define a specific aspect of the domain, and each of these subcomponents has two to five elements that describe a specific feature of the subcomponent. When using the framework as an evaluation instrument, each element is rated on a rubric that ranges from "Unsatisfactory" to "Distinguished" with "Basic" and "Proficient" separating the lowest and highest ratings of the rubric (Danielson, 2007).

As we were adopting Danielson's framework as part of our evaluation process, we discovered that Danielson had teamed up with Rick Welsh of NoBox Inc. to combine a digital version of her rubric with "TimerData Observation Software." As a result, "Framework for PC" was born. With "Framework for PC" an administrator can easily collect essential, relevant information during an observation and then integrate that information into the Framework for Teaching reporting process. The reporting process of the software allows you to produce a thorough, objective analysis supported from data collected in the classroom. It also allows you to display quantifiable

observation data with instant charts, graphs, and tables (Retrieved January 5, 2010, from NoBox Inc. website: <http://noboxinc.com/framework/index.html>).

Danielson notes that, "Framework for PC, produced by NoBox Inc, is an observation and evaluation tool that enables users to take observation notes electronically, with an automatic time stamp, code those notes to the framework for teaching, and then sort all the notes according to the components. Therefore, all the comments about, for example, the environment of respect and rapport, are clustered together, and can be looked at and interpreted against the rubric. Then the results of several observations can be displayed together, permitting the observer to discern patterns over time or in different situations" (Retrieved January 5, 2010, from NoBox Inc. website: <http://noboxinc.com/framework/index.html>).

While the Framework for PC software is a wonderful evaluation tool, it also has the potential to be a tool that can be used to generate professional conversations among practitioners as they seek to enhance their skill in the complex task of teaching. With appropriate administrative and teacher training, the development of a common understanding of the framework occurs. This common understanding allows the framework to become an instrument of growth rather than just an evaluation tool. This common understanding can also be used as the foundation of a school or district's mentoring, coaching, professional development, and teacher evaluation processes. By doing so, these programs are linked together and results in teachers becoming more thoughtful practitioners.

We are only in the first year of our new evaluation process, but we have been impressed with the "Framework for PC" software. Combined with our focus on professional development for teachers in other areas of the evaluation process, we are very optimistic that the processes will lead to improved student achievement for all our students. If you are interested in learning more about the software or our evaluation process, please feel free to contact me or you may also visit <http://noboxinc.com/framework/index.html> for further information about the software.

Danielson, C. (2007). Enhancing professional practice: A framework for teaching. Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.